



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

STATE OF MISSOURI

JEFFERSON CITY

(573) 751-3222

<http://go.missouri.gov>

MATT BLUNT
GOVERNOR

ROOM 216
STATE CAPITOL
65101

October 26, 2006

Dear Missouri Education Leaders:

I hope you were able to participate in the October 19, 2006 interactive Internet broadcast titled "Enhancing School Safety: A Dialog on Targeted School Violence." This program, jointly produced by the Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA), was one of many school safety initiatives underway even before the recent events involving potential violence in Missouri schools. The discussions during the broadcast made clear that we are all partners in reaching the goal of keeping our schools and, more importantly, our children safe. I want to ensure you are aware of the many programs and resources that presently exist to assist schools in addressing violence.

Governor's Homeland Security Advisory Council Creates Safe Schools Working Group

Several months ago, the Governor's Homeland Security Advisory Council created a Safe Schools Working Group. Members include educators and education-related organizations, as well as state agencies. The group is focused on developing consistent emergency plans throughout the state in order to achieve a unified, seamless approach to school safety. One resource they are employing is an Internet health and safety/emergency planning tool developed by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the MSBA. I urge you to make use of this resource, which is available to all schools at: www.schoolsprepared.org. This tool may be updated as health and safety threats to schools change.

Regional Homeland Security Oversight Committees to Include Educators

In recent weeks, DPS directed the Regional Homeland Security Oversight Committees (RHSOC) to re-examine and re-evaluate their relationships with schools in their regions and to address first responder partnerships with schools. Each RHSOC was asked to develop a working group involving all public, private and parochial schools in the region to review and assess the schools' emergency plans and to ensure that those plans included input from law enforcement, first responders and public and mental health agencies. I have also directed each RHSOC to add an elementary and secondary education representative to its membership so that schools are actively engaged in homeland security planning.

SWAT and SRT Leaders Develop Best Practices for School Settings

DPS is also working to bring together law enforcement tactical team leaders at the federal, state and local level to develop best practices for law enforcement in school hostage situations. The Missouri State Highway Patrol will host Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) and Special Response Team (SRT) leaders from across the state at a meeting in Jefferson City in mid-November. Presenters will include representatives from the Pennsylvania State Police, who will discuss their response to the recent Amish school shooting. A roundtable discussion from attendees on best practices/lessons learned will occur. The leaders of these teams will then pass this information and training on to their own departments, including non-response team personnel.

Incident Command System Training for Law Enforcement and School Administrators

DPS is partnering with the Missouri Sheriff's Association in developing joint law enforcement/school administrators Incident Command System (ICS) training in Missouri. The ICS is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept. It allows its users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. Given the magnitude of recent incidents involving school violence, neither law enforcement nor school administrators alone can manage these types of situations. Partnerships are necessary to ensure the safety and security of students and school staff. These partners must work together in a smooth, coordinated effort.

This training, which will focus on school violence related incidents, will be offered at different geographical locations throughout Missouri and allow both school personnel and law enforcement to not only receive the training at the same time, but also to discuss unique challenges for their specific jurisdictions.

State Agencies Asked to Review School Safety Programs

I am requesting that the appropriate state agencies review their current school safety programs to ensure state funding is being effectively utilized to address the current safety risks and demands faced by schools on a daily basis. I will continue to work closely with those departments involved in school safety issues to ensure that the state provides appropriate resources to our schools.

I want to clarify one issue that has been misrepresented by the media, among others. It has been reported that I suggested or support a proposal to arm all school teachers. That is not the case. When asked what I thought about the idea of permitting qualified teachers to carry guns at school, I replied that it was something to be discussed. I do believe that almost any idea, the goal of which is to increase the safety of our children in schools, is worthy of discussion. This does not mean that I support all such ideas, nor do I support arming all school teachers.

Governor's Recommendations for Enhanced School Safety

My goal is to build on the valuable exchange of information provided at last week's simulcast. If your school is not doing so already, I encourage you to implement the following:

- Create a comprehensive school safety plan and review that plan on a regular basis.
- Include all levels of public safety personnel (local and state law enforcement, fire and first responders), as well as all sectors of school personnel (instructional, administrative and functional staff), in your planning process.
- Continue to communicate with stakeholders on providing safe schools. Parents, students, staff, administration and public safety personnel should be in constant communication regarding new developments and incident prevention methods.
- Provide training, at least annually, to personnel in all sectors on school safety procedures. Training is offered through the Missouri Department of Public Safety, the Missouri School Boards Association, the Department of Mental Health and the Center for School Safety.
- Assist students in feeling connected to their schools. Character education plays an important role in keeping students engaged as part of the school community.

Additional School Safety Resources

Additional state resources are available to assist you in addressing the safety needs of your school. The Missouri Office of Homeland Security offers digital reference material and studies on school violence. They are available at: www.dps.mo.gov/HomelandSecurity.

Safe schools result from integrated planning between schools, law enforcement and first responders at all levels of government. I have worked to develop the necessary partnerships to ensure our children are educated in a secure environment in which they feel safe and are eager to learn. I am committed to continuing these efforts and look forward to future cooperation between my administration and your school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Blunt". The signature is stylized with a large, bold "M" and a cursive "Blunt".

Matt Blunt